

John Sevier to Andrew Jackson, May 8, 1797, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

JOHN SEVIER TO JACKSON.

Belviu 1 May 8, 1797

1 In his diary Sevier notes that on May 8 he “went to Judge McNairys (Court began)”, and he spent most of the nights there during his sixteen days' stay in Nashville. He spells erroneously Bellview, the name of McNairy's residence. See Heiskell's *Jackson*, II. 544.

Sir: Your letter of this day is before me, and to which I reply in a concise, and I trust satisfactory manner.

permit me however in the first place to remark, that while I am particularly desirous of being at peace with all mankind my heart recoils at and disdains the idea of passing over in silence an unjustifiable attack on my character. I do not think it necessary to state the reasons which determined me to send blank commissions for the Cavalry officers of Mero district to General Robertson. My inclination however leads me to declare, that in doing so I was neither actuated by party spirit or any other improper motive, but thought that I was strictly within the line of my duty. If in this or any other instance I have violated the Constitution, to the proper authority I am accountable.

Your public observations on my official conduct was represented to me as unfriendly and illiberal, I do not at present recollect the particular expressions; But Sir the inferance I drew was, that they merited the Epithet Scurrilous, and proceeded from a wish to injure my reputation; which produced in me that sperit of resentment which exists in the breast of every good man. Thus impressed I wrote the letters you allude to. The expressions

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you have Quoted might probably have been used; some of them I am sure were; at that period it was not a matter of consequence to me who saw them. I viewed you as my enemy and thus was not choice in my language. On your way to philadelphia (before which the letters were written) I expected to have seen you, and intended to have had personal conferance, but in this I was disappointed. A few days after you had set out for Congress, a letter from Genl. Robertson placed the matter in a differant point of view, and my resentment was greatly softened; on the return of Judge Claiborne my mind was considerably relieved; from that character I received a statement of the business which I fully confided in, and which led me to conclude that altho (in my opinion) your attack upon my public character was unmerited, I was not authorised to view you as a private enemy. Be not surprised then, at my communications to you while at the northward. My duties in office dictated the propriety of corresponding with you, and my feelings led me to the using of a friendly language. Thus Sir in General terms I have answered your letter. My reputation Mr. Jackson is to me my only treasure; it is the greatest pleasure of my declining years; I have laboured to merit the esteem and confidence of my Countrymen, and the great object of my political life, has been to promote the welfare of this part of the Western country; now the State of Tennessee. How far I have succeeded is not for me to determine. The voice of calumny has more than once been busied in trying to effect my political Distruction; I have had too many attacks upon my own character, to be desirous of attacking that of any other Citizen. rest assured then Sir, any observations I made in the letters you have quoted, were not bottomed on malice; they were the language of a man who thought himself highly injured, and if it betrayed a little imprudence, I will here add, that like yourself when passion agitates my Breast, I can not view things in the calm light of mild philosophy.

Your most obedt. Hbl Servt.

P. S. an answer is requested.